

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 9-24 are pending herein. Claims 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21 and 23 have been amended hereby to correct matters of form and for clarification purposes. The specification and Abstract have also been amended to correct minor matters of form, and the Title has been rewritten hereby, as well. Applicant respectfully submits that no new matter has been added.

1. Applicant affirms the provisional election with traverse to prosecute the claims of Species I (claims 9-10) made on March 6, 2003. Applicant acknowledges that claims 1-8 were cancelled in the Preliminary Amendment filed with the original application on January 23, 2001. Upon further review, Applicant respectfully submits that dependent claims 13, 15, 17, 19, 21 and 23, which depend from independent claim 9, also read on the elected Species. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the above-identified dependent claims also be examined along with claims 9 and 10 of Species I that were provisionally elected.

2. The objection to the Title is noted, but deemed moot in view of the amended Title submitted herewith. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that this objection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

3. The objection to the Abstract is noted, but deemed moot in view of the rewritten Abstract submitted herewith. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that this objection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

4. Claims 9-10 were rejected under §103(a) over Rothenberger in view of Boyd et al. (Boyd) and in further view of Kinsman. Applicant respectfully traverses this ground of rejection.

Independent claim 9 recites a method for manufacturing a conduction assist member having a plurality of conduction members disposed in a plurality of through

holes formed in an insulating elastic sheet. The manufacturing method comprises a first step of forming a plurality of through holes in two films comprising an insulating elastic material at locations corresponding to each other, each of the through holes extending from a first opening to an opposed second opening. The method also includes a second step of forming, from a conductive material, a structure consisting of a plurality of cut pieces linked to one another in a linear manner, each of the cut pieces having at least one cut defining at least two blades, and a third step of disposing the structure (of the second step) between the two films so that each cut piece is disposed in a respective through hole, and bringing the two sheets together into thermal press contact to form a sheet. The method also includes a fourth step of cutting the cut pieces from one another and bending at least one of the at least two blades toward the first opening portion of a respective through hole so that an end portion of the at least one blade protrudes from a respective first opening portion on the same surface of the sheet.

On the other hand, Rothenberger relates to an injection molding method for forming a housed metallic contact connector. Referring to Fig. 3 of Rothenberger, after the metallic contact array 8 is stamped from a conductive chip 7 and the excess metal 10 removed, the strip 7 is placed into an injection mold and plastic is injected therein to form a housing 4 (see Rothenberger Fig. 6). A metallic strip 7, with one unhoused four-position contact array 8 and another housed metallic array is shown in Fig. 4 of Rothenberger. After the metallic array is housed, the contact figures 2 and 3 are cantilevered in opposite directions.

Applicant respectfully submits, however, that there is no disclosure or suggestion in Rothenberger of forming, from a conductive material, a structure consisting of a plurality of cut pieces linked to one another in a *linear* manner, as recited in the second step of claim 9. That is, the contact members of Rothenberger's contact array are linked to one another in a *radial* manner prior to encasement and singulation.

Further, Applicant respectfully submits that, contrary to the PTO's assertion, Rothenberger does not disclose a step of forming two insulating elastic films having through holes corresponding to each other, because the injection molded plastic used to form the housing of Rothenberger cannot be considered insulating elastic films that are brought together to form the sheet, as recited in claim 9. Rather, the injection molded plastic for the contact housing of Rothenberger is molded directly to the contacts, and, after molding, is a rigid plastic body which does not in any way, at any point in Rothenberger's method, correspond to an insulating elastic film sheet made from films, such as those recited in independent claim 9. Indeed, Applicant respectfully submits that Rothenberger is completely silent with respect to at least the first three steps recited in independent method claim 9.

The PTO admitted that Rothenberger "fails to disclose laying the structure between two films and punching through the sheet and bending the structure by punching" in section 6 of the Office Action. In an attempt to overcome the admitted deficiencies of Rothenberger, the PTO relied on Boyd (with respect to the third step of claim 9) and Kinsman (with respect to claim 10).

Applicant respectfully submits that, contrary to the PTO's assertion, it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Rothenberger's injection molding process method by laying the structure between two films as taught by Boyd "for the purpose of eliminating an expensive molding machine to form films" (Office Action, section 6, lines 13-15). As mentioned above, Rothenberger discloses a housed contact array that is produced by injection molding techniques. The PTO's suggested combination would essentially eviscerate the teachings of Rothenberger by removing the injection molded housing in favor of the laminate structure of Boyd. The PTO's conclusion that this substitution would reduce manufacturing cost is speculative, at best.

In addition, Applicant respectfully submits that even if one skilled in the art simply took Rothenberger's radially aligned contact array and put it between the layers of Boyd's laminate, the resultant method would still not include the step of "forming . . . a structure . . . of cut pieces linked to one another in a linear manner," as claimed. That is, at most, Boyd merely discloses a contact pad made from laminated planar insulating sheets having recesses (46, 48 of Fig. 5) and apertures (44) containing contacts (10) formed of flat metal stock having spring characteristics (see Abstract of Boyd). Applicant respectfully submits, however, that there is no disclosure or suggestion in Boyd of the steps used to manufacture the contact body, or the order in which these steps would be performed, much less any disclosure or suggestion of the specific manufacturing steps recited in independent claim 9.

In view of the deficiencies of both the primary and secondary references, Applicant submits that even if one of ordinary skill in the art were to "modify Rothenberger by laying the structure between two films, as taught by Boyd," as the PTO suggested, they could not possibly have arrived at the present invention absent Applicant's own disclosure.

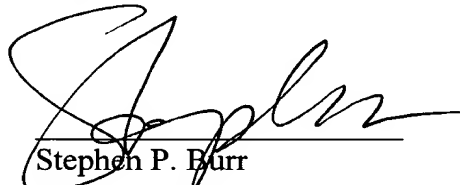
For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that all claims pending herein define patentable subject matter over the art of record. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the above rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

If the Examiner believes that contact with Applicant's attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, the Examiner is herein requested to call Applicant's attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date


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